

D&D Fight Club

Skiurid Ninja

By Robert Wiese



Welcome to *Fight Club*! This column provides complex opponents -- or occasionally allies -- at various challenge ratings. All you have to do is choose the right CR and drop it into your game. So if you're looking for a foe that's just a little different, this column is for you!

Design Notes

As soon as I saw these guys, I knew I liked them. They're unusual, they're kinda cute, and you can make a swarm of them. What's not to like? And it can be an entertaining challenge to do something fun with a creature that doesn't normally survive long in combat. Throw a swarm of these guys at your player characters and they'll be running. At least the first time.

Skiurids are kind of silly creatures, really. They are essentially Negative Energy Plane squirrels that collect shadow "nuts" by using their powers on living creatures. Very few might find them terrifying, and most of the time they may appear in a campaign or adventure more as an infestation nuisance than anything else. But let's look for some more potential in the little creatures. After all, stirges can pose a danger to adventurers, and they are small nuisance creatures too.



Some skiurids, the ones that are smarter than their brethren, learn skills that are normally associated with character classes. The skiurids don't have training camps and such as that; they teach themselves to become more effective so that they can lead others of their kind in collecting shadow nuggets (nuts). As they gain some real powers, they become potentially quite lethal (1d3-3 +6d6 is significant damage). These more powerful skiurids make full use of their abilities to hide, sneak, and attack from surprise to overcome the limitations of their size in combat.

If any of these works well in your campaign and proves an interesting threat, email me at robwiese8@yahoo.com so I can share your joy.

Note: Skiurids are featured in *Monster Manual IV*.

Skiurid Ninja at 4th Class Level

In order to attack, a skiurid has to move into an enemy's square. The skiurid ninja tumbles into a foe's square to avoid attacks of opportunity. Its whole attack scheme is built around denying a foe its Dexterity bonus to AC, so it attacks from hiding or while invisible. Skiurids don't have to kill a foe to create shadow nuggets, so this creature usually starts by putting up a chill darkness and then attacking one foe before retreating to wait for the shadow nugget to form. It really has no reason to kill anything, despite its alignment, and it engages foes to the death only when several skiurids can fight. In this case, they all concentrate on one foe until it is down.

A skiurid ninja of this level might be leading a group of standard skiurids, whose job it is to keep creating chill darkness fields so that more shadow nuggets can be made.

Skiurid Ninja CR 4

Skiurid rogue 2/ninja 2

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Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages --

AC 18, touch 18, **flat-footed** 14; Dodge, Mobility

(+2 size, +4 Dex, +2 Wis)

hp 18 (4 HD)

Resist evasion

Fort +1, **Ref** +10, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 **squares**), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d3-3)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +2; **Grp** -9

Atk Options chill darkness 3/day, sneak attack +1d6, sudden strike +1d6

Abilities **Str** 4, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 7, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

SQ ghost step, *ki* power, shadow jump, trapfinding

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse [B]

Skills Balance +14, Climb +5, Hide +27, Jump -1, Listen +8, Move Silently +19, Spot +8, Tumble +11, Use Magic Device +6

Shadow Jump (Su) As the *dimension door* spell; up to 3/day; caster level 1st. The magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A skiurid can jump up to 30 feet each day in this manner; this can be a single jump or a combination of jumps whose distance totals 30 feet. This amount can be split among several jumps, but each one, no matter how small, counts as a 10-foot increment.

Chill Darkness (Su) As the *darkness* spell; 3/day; caster level 3rd. A creature within the radius of this effect takes 1d6 points of damage and also takes 1 point of Strength damage unless it succeeds on a DC 13 Fortitude save. The creature takes no further damage as long as it remains within the area, but if it leaves and reenters, it is subject to both types of damage again. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +2 racial bonus. At the end of the effect's duration, if any creature has taken damage within its area, the shadows coalesce into a small nodule, about the size of a peach pit, that provides nourishment for the skiurid. This ability has no effect on undead or creatures native to the Plane of Shadow. The shadowy illumination created by this ability is sufficient for the skiurid to use its shadow jump ability.

Evasion (Ex) A skiurid ninja can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If it makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as a red dragon's fiery breath or a *fireball*), it instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the skiurid ninja is wearing light armor or no armor. A helpless skiurid ninja (such as one who is unconscious or paralyzed) does not gain the benefit of evasion.

Ghost Step (Su) A skiurid ninja can use one daily use of its *ki* power to become invisible for 1 round as a swift action. This action does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Ki Power (Su) A skiurid ninja has a pool of *ki* that can be used to manifest special powers 3 times per day. See ghost step.

Sneak Attack If a skiurid ninja attacks a living foe that is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC, it does additional damage as noted above. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. With a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike, a skiurid ninja can make a sneak attack that deals nonlethal damage instead of lethal damage. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks, and if the target has concealment the skiurid ninja cannot make a sneak attack.

Sudden Strike (Ex) If a skiurid ninja attacks a foe that is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC, the skiurid ninja can deal extra damage as noted above. Sudden strike damage works the same as sneak attack damage except that it can be used only against foes that are denied their Dexterity bonus to AC. Sudden strike and sneak attack damage stack if they apply to the same target.

Trapfinding Skiurid ninjas can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a Difficulty Class higher than 20. Skiurid ninjas can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A skiurid ninja who beats a trap's DC by 10 or more with a Disable Device check can study a trap, figure out how it works, and bypass it without disarming it.

Skiurid Ninja at 8th Class Level

With the shadowdancer ability to hide in plain sight, this version of the skiurid ninja moves into an opponent's square and then hides there, attacking from hiding and then hiding again every round it can do so. It saves its invisibility power to escape a combat or to attack during the first round. Again, it is more interested in damaging someone in the chill darkness area than in killing anything, but it will kill to defend its nest. Because the creature threatens only the square it occupies, it can make attacks of opportunity only against the foe in the same square with it.

A skiurid ninja of this level might be leading a group of 4th-level skiurid ninjas.

Skiurid Ninja CR 8

Skiurid rogue 4/ninja 3/shadowdancer 1

NE Tiny magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages --

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 18; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge
(+2 size, +4 Dex, +2 Wis)

hp 42 (8 HD)

Resist evasion

Fort +4, **Ref** +13, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d3-3)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +5; **Grp** -6

Atk Options chill darkness 3/day, sneak attack +2d6, sudden strike +2d6; Combat Reflexes

Abilities Str 4, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 12

SQ ghost step, hide in plain sight, *ki* power, poison use, shadow jump, trap sense +1, trapfinding

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse [B]

Skills Balance +14, Climb +5, Hide +30, Jump -1, Listen +10, Move Silently +21, Perform (dance) +6, Spot +10, Tumble +15, Use Magic Device +8

Chill Darkness (Su) As the *darkness* spell; 3/day; caster level 3rd. A creature within the radius of this effect takes 1d6 points of damage and also takes 1 point of Strength damage unless it succeeds on a DC 13 Fortitude save. The creature takes no further damage as long as it remains within the area, but if it leaves and reenters, it is subject to both types of damage again. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +2 racial bonus. At the end of the effect's duration, if any creature has taken damage within its area, the shadows coalesce into a small nodule, about the size of a peach pit, that provides nourishment for the skiurid. This ability has no effect on undead or creatures native to the Plane of Shadow. The shadowy illumination created by this ability is sufficient for the skiurid to use its shadow jump ability.

Evasion (Ex) A skiurid ninja can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If it makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as a red dragon's fiery breath or a *fireball*), it instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the skiurid ninja is wearing light armor or no armor. A helpless skiurid ninja (such as one who is unconscious or paralyzed) does not gain the benefit of evasion.

Ghost Step (Su) A skiurid ninja can use one daily use of its *ki* power to become invisible for 1 round as a swift action. This action does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex) A skiurid ninja can use the Hide skill even when being observed or in plain view, as long as it is within 10 feet of some sort of shadow.

Ki Power (Su) A skiurid ninja has a pool of *ki* that can be used to manifest special powers 3 times per day. See ghost step.

Poison Use (Ex): A skiurid ninja does not risk poisoning itself when using poison.

Shadow Jump (Su) As the *dimension door* spell; up to 3/day; caster level 1st. The magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. A skiurid can jump up to 30 feet each day in this manner; this can be a single jump or a combination of jumps whose distance totals 30 feet. This amount can be split among several jumps, but each one, no matter how small, counts as a 10-foot increment.

Sneak Attack If a skiurid ninja attacks a living foe that is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC, it does additional damage as noted above. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. With a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike, a skiurid ninja can make a sneak attack that deals nonlethal damage instead of lethal damage. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks, and if the target has concealment the skiurid ninja cannot make a sneak attack.

Sudden Strike (Ex) If a skiurid ninja attacks a foe that is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC, the skiurid ninja can deal extra damage as noted above. Sudden strike damage works the same as sneak attack damage except that it can be used only against foes that are denied their Dexterity bonus to AC. Sudden strike and sneak attack damage stack if they apply to the same target.

Trap Sense (Su) A skiurid ninja gains a bonus noted above on Reflex saves made to avoid traps and as a dodge bonus to AC against attacks made by traps.

Trapfinding Skiurid ninjas can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a Difficulty Class higher

than 20. Skiurid ninjas can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A skiurid ninja who beats a trap's DC by 10 or more with a Disable Device check can study a trap, figure out how it works, and bypass it without disarming it.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex) A skiurid ninja retains its Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. However, it still loses its Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

Skiurid Ninja at 12th Class Level

The skiurid ninja really comes into its own in this version, though its basic tactic is the same: Deny a foe its Dexterity bonus to AC and then attack for sneak attack and sudden strike damage. In this version, it can move into opponents' squares without provoking attacks of opportunity, and it makes full use of its Confound the Big Folk feat abilities to get sneak attacks.

A skiurid ninja of this level might be leading a group of 8th-level skiurid ninjas.

Skiurid Ninja CR 12

Skiurid rogue 5/ninja 6/shadowdancer 1

NE Tiny magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages --

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 19; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge

(+2 size, +4 Dex, +2 Wis, +1 ninja)

hp 71 (12 HD)

Resist evasion

Fort +5, **Ref** +15, **Will** +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d3-3)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** -4

Atk Options chill darkness 3/day, sneak attack +3d6, sudden strike +3d6; Combat Reflexes

Abilities Str 4, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 12

SQ acrobatics, ghost step, great leap, hide in plain sight, *ki* dodge, *ki* power, poison use, shadow jump, trap sense +1, trapfinding

Feats Combat Reflexes, Confound the Big Folk, Dodge, Mobility, Underfoot Combat, Weapon Finesse [B]

Skills Balance +14, Climb +7, Escape Artist +8, Hide +30, Jump +2, Listen +11, Move Silently +23, Perform (sing) +6, Spot +11, Tumble +17, Use Magic Device +9, Use Rope +4 (+6 bindings)

Acrobatics (Ex) A skiurid ninja has a +2 bonus on Climb, Jump, and Tumble checks.

Chill Darkness (Su) As the *darkness* spell; 3/day; caster level 3rd. A creature within the radius of this effect takes 1d6 points of damage and also takes 1 point of Strength damage unless it succeeds on a DC 13 Fortitude save. The creature takes no further damage as long as it remains within the area, but if it leaves and reenters, it is subject to both types of damage again. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +2 racial bonus. At the end of the effect's duration, if any creature has taken damage within its area, the shadows coalesce into a small nodule, about the size of a peach pit, that provides nourishment for the skiurid. This ability has no effect on undead or creatures native to the Plane of Shadow. The shadowy illumination created by this ability is sufficient for the skiurid to use its shadow jump ability.

Evasion (Ex) A skiurid ninja can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If it makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as a red dragon's fiery breath or a *fireball*), it instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the skiurid ninja is wearing light armor or no armor. A helpless skiurid ninja (such as one who is unconscious or paralyzed) does not gain the benefit of evasion.

Ghost Step (Su) A skiurid ninja can use one daily use of its *ki* power to become invisible for 1 round as a swift action. This action does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Great Leap (Ex) A skiurid ninja always makes Jump checks as if running and as if it had the Run feat, enabling it to make long jumps without a running start and granting a +4 bonus on Jump checks.

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex) A skiurid ninja can use the Hide skill even when being observed or in plain view, as long as it is within 10 feet of some sort of shadow.

Ki Dodge (Su) A skiurid ninja can use one daily use of *ki* power to grant itself concealment (20% miss chance) against all attacks for 1 round. This is a swift action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Ki Power (Su) A skiurid ninja has a pool of *ki* that can be used to manifest special powers 3 times per day. See ghost step and *ki* dodge.

Poison Use (Ex): A skiurid ninja does not risk poisoning itself when using poison.

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Trapfinding Skiurid ninjas can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a Difficulty Class higher than 20. Skiurid ninjas can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A skiurid ninja who beats a trap's DC by 10 or more with a Disable Device check can study a trap, figure out how it works, and bypass it without disarming it.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex) A skiurid ninja retains its Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. However, it still loses its Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

Additional Feats

These feats are not presented in the *Player's Handbook* or *Monster Manual*.

Confound the Big Folk (from *Races of the Wild*): This feat allows you to perform any of the following three maneuvers.

Knee Striker: To use this maneuver, you must first move into a square occupied by a foe at least two size categories larger than you. On the next round, the foe is automatically considered flat-footed against your attacks, and you gain a +4 bonus on any roll you make to confirm a critical hit.

Underfoot Defense: To use this maneuver, you must first move into a square occupied by a foe at least two size categories larger than you. On any succeeding round in which you remain in the foe's square and fight defensively, use total defense, or use Combat Expertise (minimum -1 penalty on attack rolls), any melee or ranged attack made against you has a 50% chance to strike the foe whose square you occupy instead. This chance does not apply to attacks made by the creature whose square you occupy.

Unsteady Footing: To use this maneuver, you must first move into a square occupied by a foe at least two size categories larger than you. On the next round, you can use a standard action to attempt to trip your foe without provoking attacks of opportunity. If your touch attack to initiate the trip attack succeeds, you can attempt a Strength or Dexterity check (your choice) opposed by your foe's Strength or Dexterity check (as normal) to trip your foe. Your foe may not add any bonus on his Strength or Dexterity check to avoid the trip that he would gain from his size. If your trip check fails, your opponent may not attempt to trip you. If you have Improved Trip, you can follow a successful trip attempt with an immediate melee attack.

Underfoot Combat (from *Races of the Wild*): You can move into or through a square occupied by a creature at least two size categories larger than you. You do not provoke attacks of opportunity for doing so. While you are in a square occupied by a creature at least two size categories larger than you, you gain the benefit of soft cover (+4 bonus to AC) against all attacks, including those of the creature whose space you occupy.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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